

**In the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Claims 8 and 12 have been amended. New claims 15-19 have been added. No new matter has been added.

1. (Original) A strengthening apparatus to strengthen the torso and abdominal region, comprising:

a frame; and

supporting members, wherein the supporting members are coupled to the frame and positioned to rest on the shoulders of a user during use.

2. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the supporting members are adjustable.

3. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising cross segments releasably coupled to the frame.

4. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising cross segments coupled to the frame.

5. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the frame comprises an arc member and a linear member, wherein the linear member couples to the arc member to form a semi-oval shape.

6. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein the supporting members comprise a first end and a second end, the first end being coupled to the arc member and the second end being coupled to the linear member.

7. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein the cross segments comprise a fitting member configured to receive a weight.

8. (Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 7, wherein the fitting member is releasably coupled to the cross segment.

9. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the supporting members are flexible.

10. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the frame is substantially oval in shape and is open on one side, the side opposite the open side defining a closed portion.

11. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the supporting members are contoured to create a spacing for a user's neck.

12. (Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim [1] 10, wherein the supporting members comprise a first end and a second end, wherein the first end is coupled to [one of] the open [ends] side of the frame and the second end is coupled to the closed portion of the oval.

13. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the frame further comprises a hinge mechanism such that the frame can be folded.

14. (Original) An apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein the arc member further comprises a hinge member, and the linear member further comprises a hinge member, wherein the hinge member of the arc member and the hinge member of the linear member are aligned such that the frame can be folded.

15. (New) A strengthening apparatus to strengthen the torso and abdominal region, comprising:

a frame;

supporting members coupled to the frame; and

cross segments coupled to the frame, wherein the cross segments comprise a fitting member configured to receive a weight.

16. (New) An apparatus as claimed in claim 15, wherein the fitting member is releasably coupled to the cross segment.

17. (New) A strengthening apparatus to strengthen the torso and abdominal region, comprising:

a frame; and

cross segments coupled to the frame, the cross segments comprising a fitting member configured to receive a weight.

18. (New) An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, further comprising supporting members coupled to the frame.

19. (New) An apparatus as claimed in claim 17, wherein the fitting member is releasably coupled to the cross segment.